



MCAM

MONTANA'S CIRCLE *of* AMERICAN MASTERS

## **MONTANA'S CIRCLE OF AMERICAN MASTERS VISUAL FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS**

### **Guidelines and Nomination Form**



**MONTANA  
ARTS COUNCIL**

AN AGENCY OF STATE GOVERNMENT

Strengthening the Creative Economy of Montana

## **GUIDELINES**

### **What is Montana's Circle of American Masters?**

"Montana's Circle of American Masters in Visual Folk and Traditional Arts" celebrates the contributions of Montana's master artists in visual traditional and folk arts. A member of Montana's Circle of American Masters is a person who throughout their *lifetime* of work in the traditional arts has created a notable body of work. Of significant cultural and artistic stature, their work is representative of the historic, traditional, and innovative arts and handcrafts distinctive to the State and is worthy of note on both a state and national level.

### **What are visual folk and traditional arts?**

The visual folk and traditional arts include fine handcraft and decorative arts that are indigenous to a community (ethnic, geographic, linguistic, religious, occupational) or family. They reflect the aesthetics and values of the community in which they arise and are often symbols of a group's identity. Examples include (but aren't limited to) quilting, beading, saddlemaking, tole painting, ledger art, or calligraphy. Dance, songs, poetry, instrumental music, storytelling, and local architecture are forms of traditional arts not designated as visual. Food traditions, dialects, ways of celebrating, ways of work, and belief systems are placed in the broader category of folklife. All these grassroots ways of knowing have woven Montana's rich heritage.

Traditional arts are learned informally, through careful observation and practice, usually from elders and masters and often passed on from one generation to the next. They can be self-taught within a tradition. Although inherently created for a specific use, traditional arts can move beyond functionality. Many of these arts, in spite of having roots in utility (quilt design, wheat weaving), have become primarily decorative. Because of this marriage of function and aesthetics, both qualities must be inherent in the art of fine handcraft.

### **What is the purpose of this program?**

The purpose of Montana's Circle of American Masters is to:

- Identify and highlight Master Artists and their work exemplifying aesthetic achievements in the visual traditional, folk, and native arts in Montana;
- Recognize exemplary artists and their lifetime achievement, artistic excellence, and contributions to the State's traditional arts and fine hand crafts heritage;
- Honor and preserve the State's diverse artistic and cultural heritage;
- Deepen our awareness of the rich and diverse cultural and artistic traditions of people in Montana through educational programs, documentation, and media resources.
- Promote public awareness of the importance of the creative sector, especially folk and traditional arts.

### **What are the program's guiding principles?**

As the state's most eminent and notable folk and traditional artists, Montana American Masters:

- Are recognized within their community as exemplary practitioners of visual traditional art forms, their work reflecting the highest quality of craftsmanship, design, and authenticity.
- Have listened to the heartbeat of their community, learning their art form through informal study and by carefully watching, listening, and doing.
- Create works in depth and brilliance that deepen our awareness of the rich and diverse cultural and artistic traditions of the people of Montana.
- Actively participate in their art form, as a practitioner, a mentor, or teacher, in order to promote public awareness regarding the eminence of the creative sector.
- Adhere to cultural artistic traditions and work in order to maintain the aesthetics and preservation of their art form, in the process contributing to the public visibility of traditional arts, crafts, and artists.

For an electronic version of these guidelines and the nomination form, go to [www.art.mt.gov](http://www.art.mt.gov).

- Understand that as a reflection of their culture, their art is a living form that continues to be shaped by creativity and innovation.
- Act as a model for excellence and a conduit for process and inspiration, influencing other generations of artists working within the region and beyond.

### **What are the benefits of this honor?**

Honored traditional artists will benefit from their designation as a Montana American Master in a several ways:

- In a Capitol Rotunda ceremony, join the ranks of artists of their ilk, Montana's best traditional artists,
- Have professional photographers record their work free of charge, with that record then archived.
- Have the opportunity to share their knowledge and work on the Montana Arts Council website,
- For state and regional exposure, provide work for a catalogue and potential exhibition,
- If they so wish, be featured in a special web gallery space on the State's Made in Montana site,
- Participate in a video interview,
- Share information about their art form to a wider public,
- Have the opportunity to participate in events such as the National Folk Festival in Butte, MT,
- Receive recognition at public events and through state, local and national publications,

### **Who is eligible to be selected for this honor?**

- Awards are made to individuals, not to groups.
- No posthumous awards are given.
- An individual must be a practicing artist in traditional arts.
- The individual must have a valid Montana address as a permanent resident of the state.

### **How is a member of Montana's Circle of American Masters selected?**

- Step 1. Any Montanan may recommend for consideration an individual who meets the eligibility criteria. To start the selection process, fill out the Nomination Form as completely as possible, including the short artist's bio. This form provides necessary basic information about the artist.
- Step 2. Gather the supporting information requested in the form of letters showing community support, newspaper and magazine articles, website sources or any videos (Section 7).
- Step 3. Gather the requested photographic documentation of the artist and their work (Section 8). Photographs should be of high quality in order to fully and accurately represent the depth and brilliance of the body of the nominee's work.
- Step 4. Submit the materials gathered. Electronically is preferred, to: [mac@mt.gov](mailto:mac@mt.gov). Hard copies can be submitted to: Montana's American Masters, Montana Arts Council, PO Box 202201, 830 N. Warren St. 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Helena, MT 59620-202201.
- Step 5. The MAC Folk Arts Specialist will review the materials received and will contact the artist in order to gather any additional information and documentation necessary to prepare the information packet for review by a recognized expert in the medium in which nominee works.
- Step 6. When an information packet is ready for review, the recognized expert will examine the nomination and supporting materials using the guiding principles and review criteria.
- Step 7. The expert will make a recommendation to the Montana Arts Council for Circle of American Masters recognition. The Council will make all final decisions.

### **What is the deadline for submitting materials?**

Nomination forms are accepted year-round and are submitted for review when they are deemed complete and all supporting information has been gathered. The Council receives recommendations for the Circle at its regular meetings held twice to three times a year.

For an electronic version of these guidelines and the nomination form, go to [www.art.mt.gov](http://www.art.mt.gov).

## NOMINATION FORM

### 1. Name of Artist:

### 2. Address

street & number:

city/town:

state: Montana

zip code:

telephone number:

cell phone:

email address (if available):

website (if available):

### 3. Traditional Arts Medium:

May include media (such as leather, glass, fibre, clay, metal, wood, paper) used for creating functional or decorative visual traditional arts. Please note the following:

- Work made from commercial kits or molds is not eligible. All work, especially main design elements, must be created by the artist.
- Work made solely by assembling purchased commercial objects is not eligible.
- Complete reliance on commercial materials is not considered appropriate, but if a manufactured material is used, it must be subordinate to the total design and production of the piece of art.

### 4. Function or Use

Historic Function:

Current Function:

### 5. Brief Artist Biography

On a separate sheet, please write a brief artist biography, including the following information:

- How and when the artist learned his/her skills
- How the artist connects to the community
- How community/family/work have influenced the art form
- How the individual shares knowledge of the art form

Note: Please be sure to note the artist's name and Section 5 at the top of the biography page.

**Name of Artist:**

## **6. Statement of Contribution of the Artist**

Describe below how the artist has contributed to the community and the art form by including examples that show the following:

- Respect of peers and community
- Contribution to excellence and public appreciation of the art form through teaching, preserving, and advocacy
- Work to build awareness of the art form by significantly increasing public visibility of the traditional arts.

## **7. Documentation of Contribution**

Please attach documentation of the artist's contribution on separate pages, marked with the artist's name and Section 7. Examples of possible documentation include:

- Letters from others in the community
- Newspaper and/or magazine articles
- Website References
- Video and/or DVDs

For an electronic version of these guidelines and the nomination form, go to [www.art.mt.gov](http://www.art.mt.gov).

**Name of Artist:**

## **8. Photographs of Work**

To demonstrate the quality and breadth of the artist's body of work, please include 5-10 photographs of the artwork, with three of those detail shots. Include one additional image of the artist in the process of creating a piece of work. Photographs need to be of the highest quality possible to accurately represent the work.

Slides or digital images are preferred. However, if photographs are not available in that format, submit the best images of what is available. These photographs become the property of MAC and will not be returned, so if they are the only copy, please be sure to make a duplicate before submitting. Digital images should be 300 dpi in jpeg, tsd, png, or tif. Hard copy photographs should be at least 4x6 inches and no larger than 8x10.

Label each photograph with a number and title. Then prepare an accompanying documentation page with a listing of each photographs number, title and the following information about each photograph:

- Size of the work
- Year it was created
- Materials
- The date the photograph was taken and the photographer (if known)
- Any additional "story" or explanation of the piece

If necessary, the reviewing expert may request actual samples of the artist's work. If that is the case, the artist will be contacted with further instructions.

If sending hard copy photographs or slides, please be sure to use protective pages designed to hold and protect the images.

## **9. Form Prepared By**

name/title:

organization:

date:

street & number:

city or town:

state: MT      zip code:

email:

telephone:

cell phone:

## **10. Signatures**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Artist Nominated

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Nominating

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Electronic submission is preferred, to: [mtcreativearts@gmail.com](mailto:mtcreativearts@gmail.com). Hard copies can be submitted to: Cindy Kittredge, MAC Folk Arts and Market Development, PO Box 532, Cascade, MT 59421.

For an electronic version of these guidelines and the nomination form, go to [www.art.mt.gov](http://www.art.mt.gov).